

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 519

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4184

CINCPAC FOR POLAD; STATE PASS TO USIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, IN, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

1. IN A LONG AND FRIENDLY CONVERSATION THIS MORNING SWARAN SINGH BEGAN BY STATING HIS "BROAD ASSESSMENT" THAT INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS ARE "EVOLVING IN A POSITIVE MANNER, MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION." HE HAD READ THE RECORD OF THE KISSINGER-KAUL LUNCHEON OF MARCH 19 AND FELT IT HAD BEEN A "VERY USEFUL AND GOOD TALK, AND PROVIDES A BASIS FOR FURTHER EVOLUTION AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE PL 480 NEGOTIATIONS." HE ASKED ME TO NOTE THAT THIS IS A GENERAL FEELING IN INDIA. "BY AND LARGE, EVEN IN ROUTINE ANTI-AMERICAN STATEMENTS, THE COMMUNISTS ARE

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MORE OR LESS ISOLATED. THEY GET NO SUPPORT IN THE CONGRESS

PARTIES AND NONE IN THE OPPOSITION PARTIES." DESPITE DETENTE, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT GOES ON AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE HOSTILE TO THE UNITED STATES. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN ATTACKED. HE WAS SURE THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD ENOUGH EXPERIENCE OF THIS SORT OF THING NOT BE BE OVERLY UPSET. "ONE HAS TO LIVE WITH IT." WHEN," HE CONTINUED IN A MANNER NOT ALTOGETHER CHARACTERISTIC OF EITHER OF INDIAN POLITICIANS OR FOREIGN MINISTER, "WHEN I GO INTO BARROOMS AS I OFTEN DO IN THE PUNJAB AND SIT AND TALK WITH INTELLECTUALS AND JOURNALISTS, I FIND THERE IS MUCH SATISFACTION WITH THE TREND OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA."

2. OF COURSE, HE CONTINUED, IN THIS WIDE WORLD OF OURS, IF ONE THING IS OUT OF THE WAY SOMETHING ELSE COMES UP. BANGLADESH IS OVER, AND WITH IT OUR "DIFFERENCE OF ASSESSMENT" OF THAT SITUATION. VIETNAM IS "OUT OF THE WAY." NOW DIEGO GARCIA IS ATTRACTING ATTENTION OF PEOPLE IN THIS REGION. EVEN "WELL MEANTING" PEOPLE (THIS I THINK WAS DIRECTED AT ME) HAD "UNINTENTIONALLY PROJECTED THE THOUGHT THAT INDIA'S OPPOSITION TO DIEGO GARCIA IS FORMAL. THIS CREATES PROBLEMS, NOT LEAST BECAUSE IT IS FACTUALLY INCORRECT. ON THE OTHER HAND, INDIA IS NOT THE TORCH BEARER IN THIS MATTER." HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE MEETING OF THE NONALIGNED BUREAU IN ALGIERS WHERE THE FEELING ON THIS MATTER RAN VERY HIGH. EVERYONE, HE SAID, WAS REALISTIC ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THE BRITISH AND US FACILITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ARE CONSIDERABLE ALREADY. THE ADDITION OF DIEGO GARCIA "DOESN'T ADD UP TO MUCH" PERHAPS, BUT HAD BECOME A "SYMBOL." THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP IN ALGIERS WAS UNANIMOUS, INCLUDING HE SAID THE ETHIOPIANS WHO WERE OPENLY TALKING OF TERMINATING AMERICAN FACILITIES IN ETHIOPIA IF WE GO AHEAD WITH DIEGO GARCIA. HE TICKED OFF A LIST OF COUNTRIES AND THEIR VIEWS, CONCLUDING WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND WHICH HE SAID, "CANNOT BE REGARDED AS EXTREMIST." "NOT YET" SAID I.

3. I EXPLAINED TO THE MINISTER THAT I HAD NOT BEEN TOLD ANYTHING ABOUT DIEGO GARCIA OR GIVEN ANY INSTRUCTIONS AS TO WHAT POINTS TO PUT FORWARD IN A CONVERSATION SUCH AS WE WERE HAVING. I IMPLIED THAT THE ADMIRALS DON'T TRUST PEOPLE WHO NEVER ROSE ABOVE THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE, AND THAT WHILE I HAD ENLISTED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY AT AGE SIXTEEN, CONFIDENTIAL

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FAR FROM BEING TAKEN AS AN ACT OF PATRIOTIC VALOR, THIS SEEMED TO CONFIRM THE VIEW IN SOME HIGH PLACES THAT I WAS NOT A MAN OF SOUND JUDGMENT. EVEN SO I HAD BY CHANCE LEARNED SOME THINGS ABOUT DIEGO GARCIA WHICH SEEMED TO ME RELEVANT. IT WAS A TINY ISLAND, SEVEN FEET HIGH AND TWO HUNDRED FEET WIDE, WITH NO WATER AND LITTLE OF ANYTHING ELSE. THE EXPANSION NOW PLANNED MIGHT MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR A B-52 TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY LANDING, MUCH AS THEY COULD LAND ON KNIGHTSBRIDGE IF THE ALTERNATIVE

WERE CRASING IN FLAMES, BUT THERE WAS NO THOUGHT OF ANY OPERATING
BASE OF THE KIND THAT WAS BEING TALKED ABOUT IN THE INDIAN
PRESS. I URGED THAT THIS MINISCULE BUSINESS BE SEEN IN THE
LARGER CONTEXT OF A MAJOR BRITISH-AMERICAN MILITARY WITHDRAWAL
FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION. A DECADE AGO THE BRITISH RAN
THE GULF, WE HAD BASES ALL OVER PAKISTAN, THE TWO OF US WERE
SUPPLYING ARMS ALMOST EVERYWHERE. TODAY ALL THAT IS OVER.
AS A KIND OF SECOND THOUGHT WE ARE FIXING UP AN ANCHORAGE IN
A SMALL ATOLL ISLAND A THOUSAND MILES FROM THE TIP OF INDIA,
ALMOST TWO THOUSAND MILES FROM WHERE WE USED TO BE. THE MINISTER
REPEATED THAT IT REMAINED INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO HIM, NOT LEAST
NOT BECAUSE WE HAVE INDEED BEEN PULLING OUT.

4. HE THEN PROPOSED THAT WE TURN TO CONSTRUCTIVE MATTERS.
OF WHICH THE FIRST WAS DIEGO GARCIA. HE SUGGESTS THAT THE BIG
NAVAL POWERS OPERATING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION TAKE THE LEAD
IN STARTING SOME DISCUSSIONS ABOUT "MUTUAL RESTRAINT IN THE
PROCESS OF ESCALATION" OF MILITARY PRESENCE HEREABOUTS AND THAT
THEY DO THIS IN "ASSOCIATION" WITH "SOME" POWERS IN THIS REGION.
IN EUROPE WE ARE ALREADY AT WORK ON MUTUAL AND BALANCED FORCE
REDUCTIONS. COULD WE NOT AGREE OUT HERE NOT TO ESCALATE. I
NOTED HE HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE NAVAL POWERS SHOULD TAKE THIS
INITIATIVE. HE SAID THAT WAS HIS INTENTION. HE PROPOSED THE
INITIATIVE COME FROM THE US, UK, RUSSIA, AND FRANCE. THE
ESCALATION MUST BE REVERSED, HE CONTINUED. HE ASKED WAS IT
NOT POSSIBLE TO STOP
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